



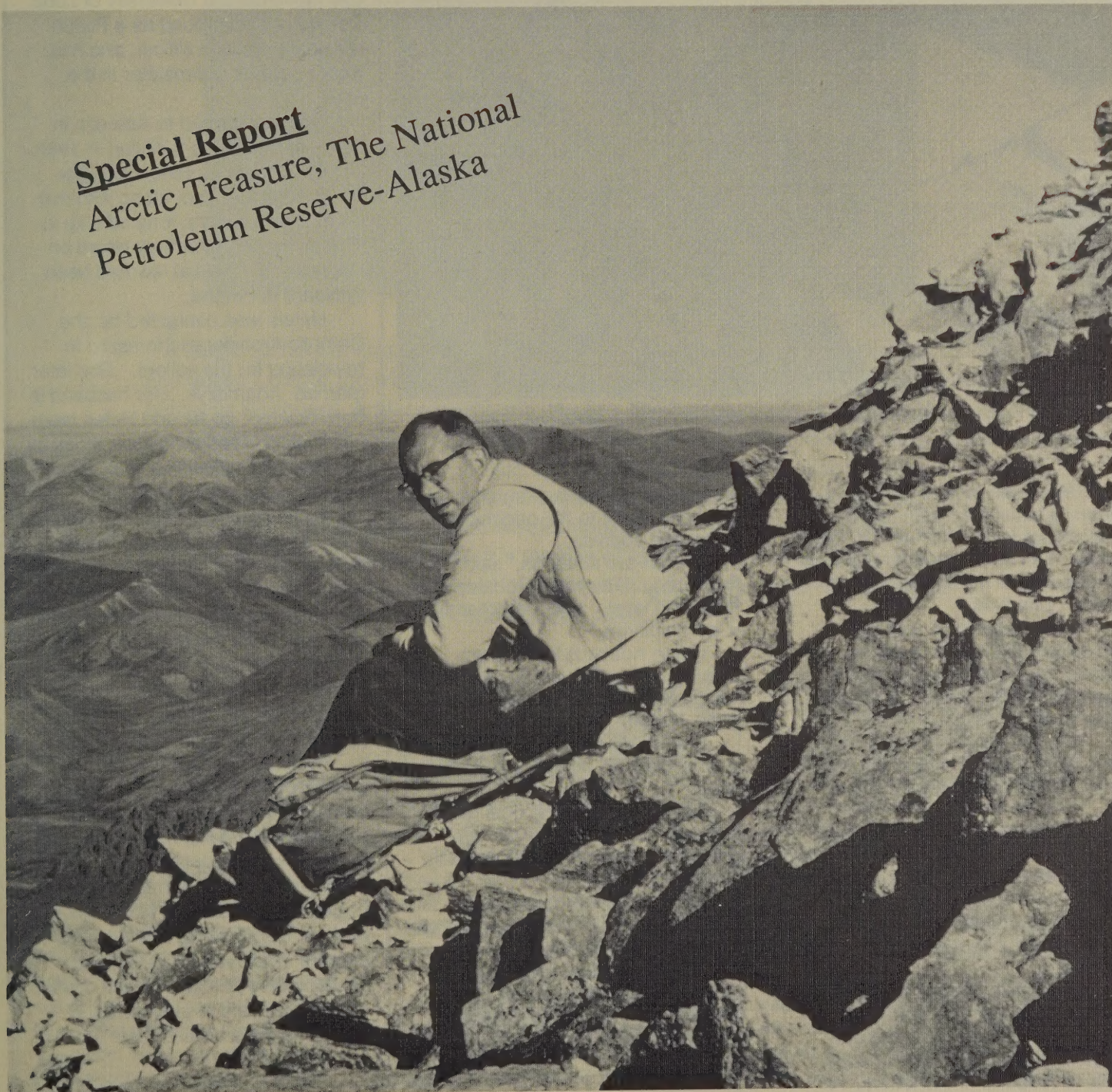
blm - alaska

frontiers

managing public lands for multiple use

Issue 16 May 1989

Special Report
Arctic Treasure, The National
Petroleum Reserve-Alaska



Drogi BLM: (Dear BLM)



"But I think I will take them home and write a letter in Polish to each one. They are children, you know."

When she looked at the first letter, a bittersweet grin moved across her face. "It's been a long while, but I still remember this kind of paper from my school days in Lodz," she said.

Helen Adamczyk was just presented with about a dozen letters from Poland variously requesting maps, photos, and brochures about Alaska's public lands.

"Do you think you could translate these for us?" asked the woman from BLM's public affairs office.

Nobody knows how it started, but over the past several years, BLM has received more than a hundred letters and postcards from Poland, most of which were written in Polish, some in Russian and a few in halting English.

The public affairs office was able to tell that the writers wanted recreation literature and general information about BLM, but wasn't able to respond to the letters. All

they could do was mail an array of brochures back to the originating name and address.

"These are students," said Adamczyk, "They are probably in 7th or 8th level, and are dreaming of exotic places."

Helen Adamczyk has been working as a volunteer for BLM's Alaska State Public Affairs Office since January.

She brings with her a unique set of qualifications, including fluency in Polish.

Adamczyk said she'd be glad to translate. But that's not all. She also offered to write letters to each student.

Now Adamczyk is helping prepare a friendly letter of greetings in Polish which BLM can use in responding to future requests for information about our public lands. Who knows? Maybe we'll attract a new generation of tourists to Alaska.

—RM

Helen Adamczyk: very special volunteer

Besides speaking Polish, Helen Adamczyk speaks Russian and English, has a degree in Administrative Law from the University of Lodz, Poland, a background as a Polish criminal probation officer, and has experience as a translator in the U.S.

She immigrated to America in 1975, and became a citizen in 1982.

On Christmas Eve, 1981, her husband-to-be, Tad, along with five other Polish sailors, jumped ship in Kodiak harbor, after they heard on the radio that martial law had been declared in Poland.

Helen was contacted by the Catholic Archdiocese to assist in translating for the sailors. She later married Adamczyk. Her husband is from Gdansk, so he and Helen have been interviewed numerous times by Anchorage TV news for their reactions to news events in Poland.

While teaching herself English from newspapers, TV and friends, Helen Adamczyk worked in maintenance for the Anchorage school system for ten years. She has done volunteer work intermittently as a translator for the U.S. Coast Guard, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, ARCO Alaska, Inc, and Providence and Humana hospitals.

Her volunteer work at BLM is mainly for the employee relations branch. Helen is sharpening her administrative skills, hoping one day to land a permanent position.

Eyes twinkling and in perfect English, Helen says, "I file, xerox, work on length-of-service awards, prepare employee ID cards, and anything else to make myself useful.

"I don't want to stay home, I want to make a contribution."

—RM

ARCTIC TREASURE

The National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska

by Edward Bovy



Kivliktort Mountain

Imagine a land of contrasts. A land where the sun doesn't set in the summer and doesn't rise in the winter. A land where the temperature can be either 80 below or 80 above. A place seemingly desolate and barren of life in one season that bursts forth with delicate flowers and millions of birds a few months later. A land where dinosaurs roamed. A land that is home to a unique Native people. And a land with coal, oil, minerals and natural gas hidden beneath its surface.

Such a land exists today in the northernmost corner of the United States, just 1200 miles from the North Pole. It's the size of Indiana (about 37,000 square miles) and is the largest single tract of BLM-managed public lands in the United States. It's the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska.

The reserve was originally known as the Naval Petroleum Reserve Number 4 when it was established by President Harding in 1923. The designation was based on oil-stained sandstones in the foothills of the Brooks Range and oil seeps along the arctic coast.

The Navy, the U. S. Geological Survey, and private contractors conducted a geologic, seismic and drilling program from 1944 to 1953. Later, the USGS conducted regional and detailed geologic investigations to help assess mineral potential.

About 50 percent of the North Slope Petroleum Province is in the

NPR-A and there are an estimated 5.9 billion barrels of oil in place. Known oil discoveries are at Umiat, the Simpson area, and the Fish Creek area. The Umiat area is considered a sub-giant field with an estimated 70 to 120 million barrels of recoverable oil.

In 1976 the reserve was transferred from the Navy to the Interior Department and renamed the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska. From then until 1981, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) managed the surface and the USGS drilled 26 test holes to obtain broad-based geologic information.

In 1980 Congress directed BLM to begin an expeditious oil and gas leasing

program. BLM held four lease sales between 1981 and 1984, and about 1,350,000 acres were leased. One well was drilled. Since then, interest from the oil industry has slackened and leases have expired as the price of oil dropped. Currently there are 24 leases covering 558,950 acres.

Gary Brougham of BLM's Division of Minerals feels that additional acres will be leased, but isn't sure about time frames. "There are so many political and economic variables that can change at a moment's notice, I wouldn't want to predict when a sale could occur. But it's a fact that industry will be wildcat

drilling not only in the Colville Delta but also to the south. So the interest is nearby and moving our way."

Minerals

The geology of the southern portion of the NPR-A is thought to be similar to the geology of the Red Dog lead-zinc deposit which is now being developed to the west of NPR-A. Mineralization has been identified in at least three areas: Drenchwater Creek, Kivliktort Mountain and Story Creek. Assays at Drenchwater Creek contain up to 31 percent zinc and eight percent lead. This compares to 17 percent zinc and five percent lead at Red Dog (a recognized world-class deposit).

Noteworthy concentrations of silver, chromium, barium, cadmium, antimony, fluorine, nickel, copper and the platinum group have also been discovered in NPR-A. Some of these have been classified as strategic and critical minerals.

Phosphate rocks have been found, but their extent and quality are still undetermined. These may yield valuable by-products such as uranium, vanadium, and rare earths. Rare earths are an essential ingredient in the search for a "superconductor." Recent breakthroughs in this newly-emerging technology may spark interest for additional exploration.

But there are several problems that must be solved before any hardrock mining could occur. First, NPR-A is closed to mineral entry by an act of Congress. Whether NPR-A should be opened to mineral entry and, if so, under what conditions is subject to speculation. Second, much more needs to be learned about what is out there. "We really need a more definitive and broad-based exploration effort to define the extent of these mineral deposits," says Brougham.

Coal

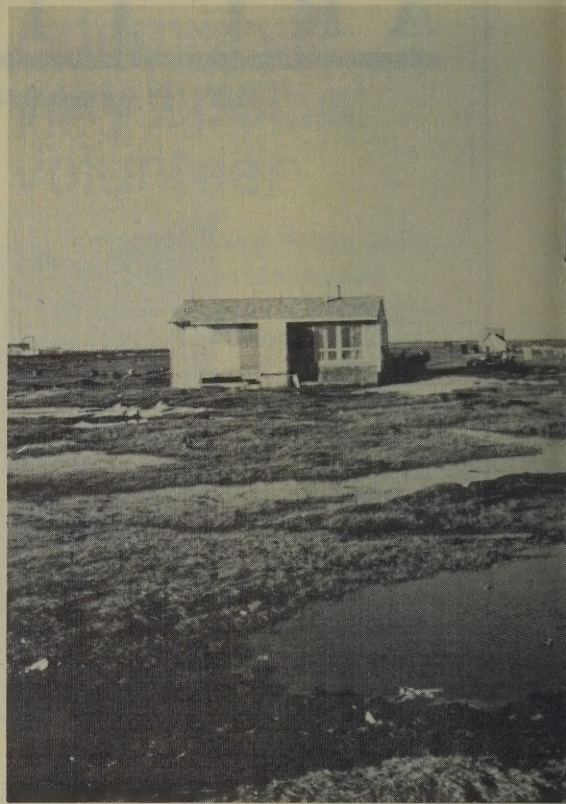
It has been known for many years that NPR-A has vast deposits of coal. In fact, more than half of the bituminous coal in the United States may exist on Alaska's North Slope, and much of this is in the NPR-A. Yet data gathered during the 1960's has never been evaluated due to lack of time, money and people to do the work.

Speculative estimates indicate that NPR-A may contain between 300 billion and four trillion tons of coal. One estimate concludes that there are about 200 billion short tons of coal in seams at least five feet thick and less than 1,000 feet deep. Deposits such as these may be economical to mine in the future. Other deposits will likely remain uneconomical to mine for many years.

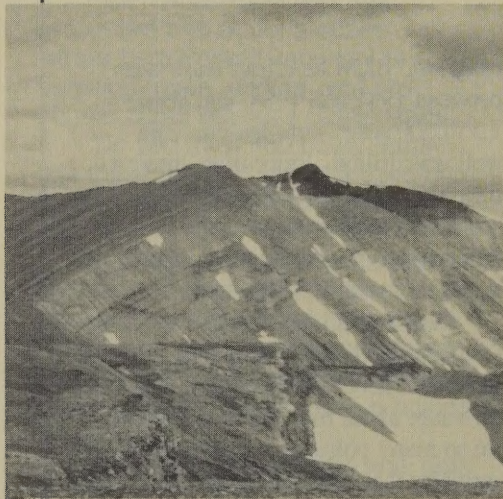
Gas

Known gas fields include Barrow, Walakpa, Square Lake, Meade, and Wolf Creek. The South and East Barrow gas fields are currently producing.

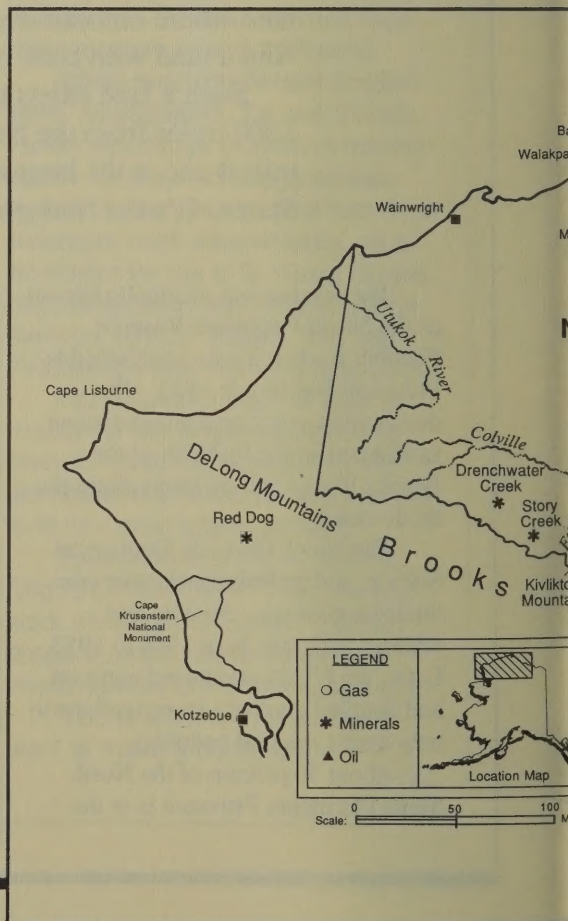
So, the NPR-A treasure chest remains unopened, waiting for time and economics to work in its favor.



Native Alaskans living in the NPR-A depend on water environment.

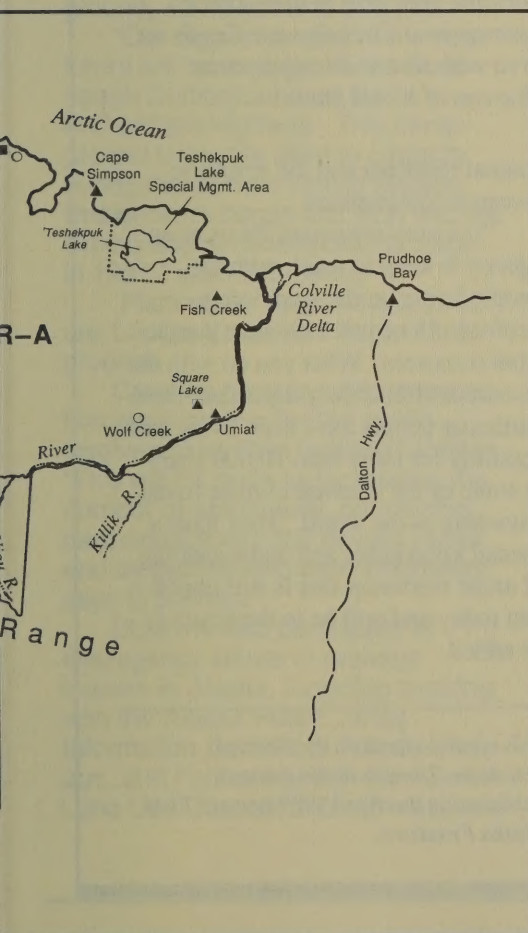


View of the Siksikpuk Formation on a tributary of the Etivluk River in the southeast corner of the reserve (photo by Marvin Mangus).





owl, fish, and caribou for survival in a harsh



BLM manages many resources in National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska

"Although Congress intended that oil and gas be developed on the reserve, BLM recognizes that there are other resources and uses out there," says Arctic District Manager Tom Dean.

For example, there are four Native villages in the NPR-A. BLM has worked with the North Slope Borough and BIA to identify and mark winter trails for use by snowmachines and winter supply trains. "These supply trains are an important means to get fuel, construction materials and heavy equipment to the villages. We try to keep them on routes that use frozen lakes and rivers as much as possible. Also, we require that there be at least six inches of snow and 12 inches of frozen ground before the tracked vehicles can go on the ground. The trail markers really help because much of the travel is done in the dark," says Dean.

"And we have a number of biological studies in progress. We've been working with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in a radio collaring study of grizzly bears in the Utukok uplands. We also have been tracking caribou for 10 years," he added.

Special management areas

Three areas in NPR-A have been designated by the BLM for special management to preserve biological values. These include Teshekpuk Lake, the Utukok Uplands, and the Colville River.

White-fronted, Canada and lesser snow geese, black brant, and other birds migrate long distances to take advantage of the abundant food and cover available for their nesting and molting in the Teshekpuk Lake area. About 20 percent of the world's population of Pacific black brant are found at Teshekpuk Lake, giving this

area international significance. BLM initiated a five-year cooperative study with the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Minerals Management Service to learn more about the needs of the birds during their molting and nesting time. This study is now entering its third year.

The Colville River is the largest river in the Alaskan arctic and passes through the NPR-A. It provides a home for a diverse population of mammals, fish and birds such as the arctic peregrine falcon, rough-legged hawk and gyrfalcon. The largest moose on the North Slope are found in the Colville River area.

The Utukok Uplands is the calving grounds for the 240,000 animals of the western arctic caribou herd.

Other resource values

There has been a recent upsurge in interest in rafting through wild areas untouched by man. Today there are at least three commercial outfitters conducting trips on the Killik, Etivluk/Nigu and Colville Rivers. Recreational use can be expected to increase as the well known areas become more publicized.

NPR-A has numerous paleontology sites. "There's a tremendous amount of fossil material up there," says BLM anthropologist Bob King, "including shells, skin imprints of dinosaurs, and fossilized dinosaur footprints. There is great potential for further research. It's virtually untouched." The University of Alaska and the University of California-Berkeley have been conducting studies and evaluating sites for the past three years near the Colville River.

BLM looks at new management options for NPR-A's future

"BLM has been managing NPR-A for more than ten years, and it has become obvious to us that there is a variety of important resources in the reserve. Some of them are of international significance," says BLM-Alaska State Director Michael Penfold.

“

Right now we have the time to do the necessary research and apply sound scientific principles towards both the wise use and the protection of the resources in NPR-A.

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Michael Penfold,
BLM-Alaska State Director

"Since the area is not under a lot of pressure for development, I think that the country has an opportunity to be thoughtful about how and when the area is both protected and developed. Right now we have the time to do the necessary research and apply sound scientific principles towards both the wise use and the protection of the resources in NPR-A. This is clearly a situation for conservation stewardship. The area has world class resources in energy, strategic minerals, wildlife, wetlands and uplands. We are striving for environmentally sustainable development that will assure that the wildlife of the area is available in perpetuity," he added.

This year BLM will start working on a preliminary document to get a better picture of the overall multiple-use values of the area.

"It's been eight years since any serious comprehensive planning has been done on the reserve," says Tom Dean, BLM's manager for the Arctic District.

Dean also says that BLM would like to develop additional ties to the

Jake Jansons uses a one-inch portable core drill to drill a rock outcrop near Drenchwater Creek, an area with zinc and lead deposits (Bureau of Mines photo)

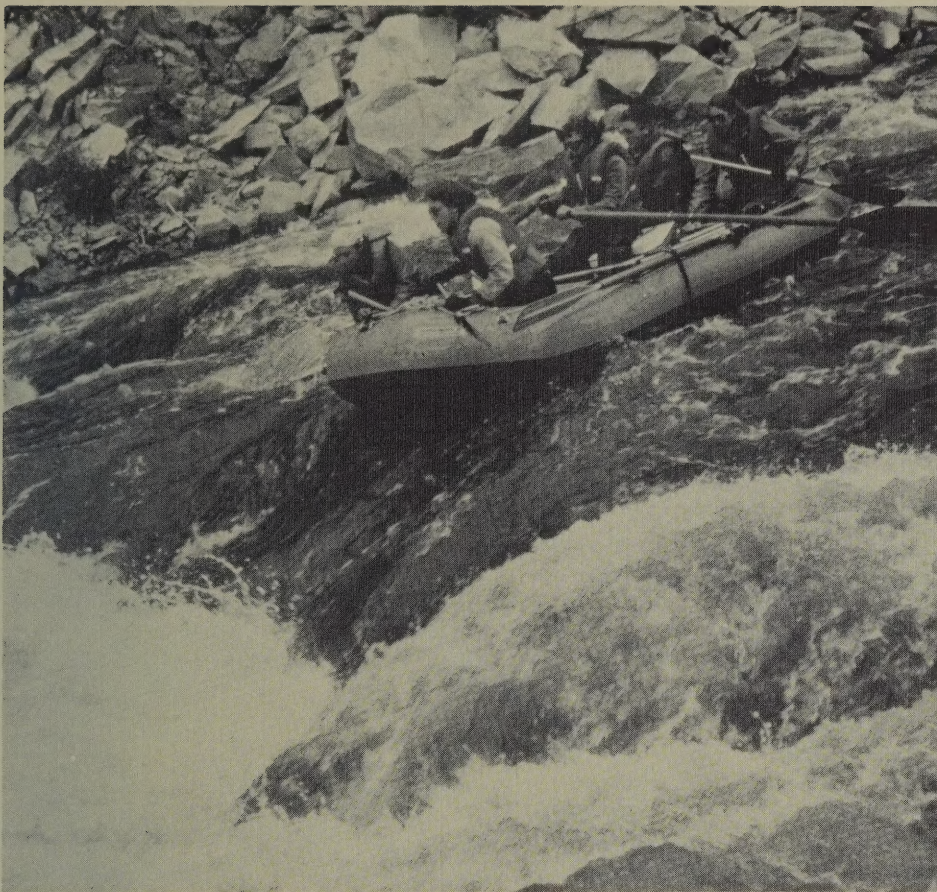
Inupiat residents and the scientific research communities.

"It's very important for us as an agency to keep in touch with the people living on the land," says Penfold. "You can't separate people from resources. What you do with the resources affects the people, and these particular people have been living successfully for more than 10,000 years in some of the harshest climate found anywhere in the world. They have a special knowledge and understanding of arctic resources that is still important today and will be in the future," he added.

This special report on the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska was published in the April 1989 issue of *BLM Alaska Frontiers*.



The western Arctic caribou herd, numbering up to 240,000 animals, uses the Utukok Uplands for calving grounds. BLM has designated a special management area there in recognition of these biological values.



Canyon Rapids is one of the major highlights of a float trip down the Gulkana National Wild River.

six sites at the Salmon Lake Campground, 40 miles north of Nome.

"Our biggest project in the near future will be to upgrade the Sourdough Campground on the Richardson Highway. This campground is usually filled to capacity during the salmon fishing season. Design work began last year and we expect actual construction to begin in 1991," says O'Sullivan.

Planned for upgrading in 1992 are Cripple Creek and Eagle campgrounds.

Creating greater outdoor recreation opportunities for the public involves more than building facilities. "This will be done by increasing the number of employees, developing partnerships with the private sector and by getting help from volunteers," says O'Sullivan.

BLM will also participate in interagency efforts to promote tourism in Alaska, including working with the Alaska Public Lands Information Centers in Tok, Anchorage, and Fairbanks; with the Alaska Land Use Council; and with Alaska's

Division of Tourism.

Two years ago, BLM-Alaska began producing a new series of recreation publications. Eight titles are available now and more are scheduled to be printed this year.

This summer BLM employees will be providing information on recreation opportunities along the pipeline corridor north of Fairbanks at an interagency visitor center on the Dalton Highway at Coldfoot. Interpretive exhibits at the center will be installed in time for the summer tourist season. This area has become increasingly popular with tour bus companies and visitation is increasing rapidly.

"I think you can see that Recreation 2000 is not just another paper report. We are implementing it now. Things are happening now. And they will continue to happen. We want the public to recognize that BLM is one of the major providers of all types of public recreation in Alaska and that we will continue to do so for the foreseeable future," said Penfold.

Recreation at a glance on BLM Public Lands

BLM recreation facilities in Alaska, 1988

- 12 campgrounds with 218 family camping units
- 630 miles of trails
- 110 undeveloped recreation sites
- 6 public use cabins in the White Mountains NRA
- 2 shelter cabins on the Iditarod Trail
- 75 miles of improved access roads
- Fort Egbert at Eagle
- a visitor contact station at Coldfoot on the Dalton Highway

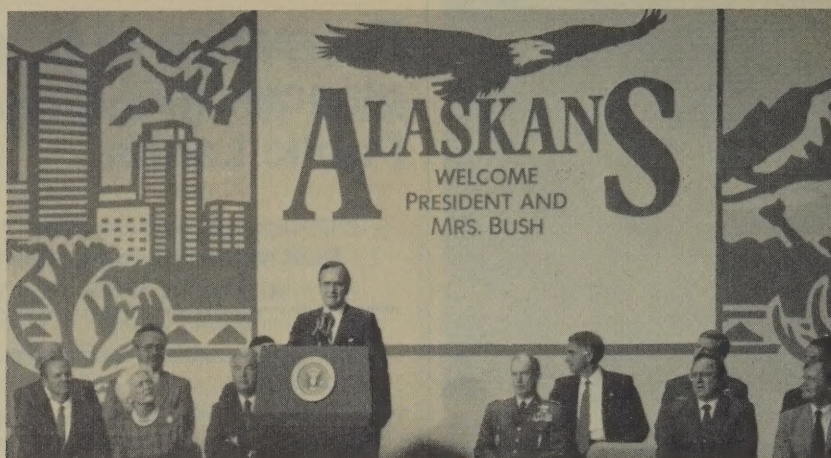
BLM congressionally designated areas

- Steese National Conservation Area
- White Mountains National Recreation Area
- Delta National Wild and Scenic River
- Gulkana National Wild River
- Beaver Creek National Wild River
- Birch Creek National Wild River
- Fortymile National Wild and Scenic River
- Unalakleet National Wild River

Proposed new construction on BLM Public Lands in Alaska

- 3 new campgrounds
- 5 new public use cabins in the White Mountains NRA
- 18 miles of new road
- 80 miles of summer and winter trails
- 20 new trailhead and visitor information points
- 1 environmental education center in Anchorage

—EB



Many BLM employees were among the thousands of Alaskans who turned out to hear President Bush speak during a brief stopover in Anchorage recently. Left, Mrs. Bush was one of the most attentive listeners.

New BLM **district manager for Glennallen** is Gene Keith, who is being transferred from Colorado. The Glennallen district office manages about 34 million acres of public land in east-central Alaska.

BLM has postponed its scheduled reintroduction of **muskox** into the central Arctic until the spring of 1990, so it can comply with a Fish and Game Board request for additional village contacts in North Slope villages. BLM and representatives from the North Slope Borough and the Alaska Fish and Game Board, will hold meetings this summer.

On March 17 the BLM published the last of four **environmental impact statements** it has been preparing on the effects of **placer mining** in an area around Fairbanks. This statement concerned the Minto Flats area. It analyzed the cumulative impacts of mining on subsistence and the environment.

BLM's Kobuk District recently published **two new recreation brochures**, one on the Kigluaik mountains north of Nome and one on the Squirrel River northeast of Kotzebue.

The Kigluaiks can be reached by road from Nome, and are excellent for hiking and camping. The Squirrel River has been proposed for wild and scenic river designation, and offers an easy float trip with good fishing. The brochures are available from any BLM office.

Representatives from more than 80 state and federal agencies, private industry groups and special interest groups met for a workshop on **wildlands** at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks in March. They discussed the dangers of ever-increasing pressures on Alaska's wild lands, especially pressures from tourism. Participants called for greater cooperation and information-sharing among agencies.

Bureau of Land Management



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Cover photo: A geologist doing field mapping in NPR-A in 1964 takes a rest on a ridge overlooking the Kuguruk River Valley. (Photo courtesy Marvin Mangus)

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